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Meet A Baptist

This was the concluding chapter of the new book **WHY I AM A BAPTIST** (Broadman, \$3.50) but had to be omitted from that book because of space limitations. We have decided to use it in this doctrinal issue, since it does relate to our Baptist doctrinal position.—Ed.)

By Joe T. Odle

Let us look for a Baptist... a representative Baptist, an average Baptist.

This will, of course, be a person hard to find, for it is impossible for one Baptist to represent all of the more than thirty-one million persons who call themselves Baptists.

Yet, we ought to be able to find one person who to some degree represents Baptists, for Baptists are what they are for a reason, and there should be some recognizable distinctives.

This is the person for whom we are looking. Mr. Baptist. What is he like?

I.

He may be young or old, but he will be old enough to have made a personal profession of his faith in Christ.

He may be rich or poor.

He may be white, black, red, yellow or brown.

None of the above things are his distinguishing marks.

How, then may we know him?

II.

Mr. Baptist is a saved person, a born again believer.

He is an immersed believer, who has come into a Baptist church by immersion.

He believes in God and in all of the great doctrines of the Christian faith.

He believes that the Bible is the Word of God and the final authority in all things religious.

He believes that Jesus Christ is the divinely conceived, virgin born Son of God. He believes that He died on the cross, arose from the grave, returned to heaven, and one day is coming again.

He believes that all men are sinners and are lost, and that their greatest and primary need is eternal salvation.

He believes that redemption has been provided by a loving God in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, and that there is salvation in no other. He believes that this salvation is by grace alone without works.

He believes that it is unto a life that is everlasting, and that one of the basic doctrines of the Bible is the eternal security of every believer.

He believes that regeneration, or the new birth, is an experience in which one receives a new nature, so that even though, the old nature remains, man is a new creature in Christ and can live a Christian life.

He believes that salvation is for this life and for eternity.

He believes that salvation is to be lived daily, and that Jesus Christ is to be Lord and Master of every Christian's life.

He believes that there is life beyond the grave, and that every man must stand before God in judgment. Beyond the judgment there is an eternal hell for the lost, and an eternal heaven for the saved.

While he believes that man's first need is salvation, he does not overlook the social and material needs, and is concerned about social action. This is secondary, however, and not primary, and he does not believe that it is the purpose of God for the church to rebuild the world.

He believes that when Christ was on earth he set up his church as an institution, in which the saved could serve him and carry out his mission.

He believes that New Testament churches are local, visible bodies, made up of baptized (immersed) believers, and thus the church has a regenerate membership.

He believes that every person who has trusted Christ is saved, and that all are in the body of Christ now, and will be together in one great assembly or church in heaven. However, churches on earth in which men can work and serve always are local and visible.

He believes that Baptist churches of today are like the New Testament churches in their organization, doctrine and practice, and that they have at least a spiritual historical relationship with churches holding basically the same position, through all of the ages since Christ established his church.

He believes that the church has two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, both of which proclaim the message of salvation, rather than procure it. He believes that baptism is only by immersion of believers, on the authority of the church, and that the Lord's Supper is a memorial supper to be observed in the church, and that only baptized (immersed) believers are to participate.

He believes that the church is a self governing body under the headship of Christ, and that all members are equal in rank and privilege.

He believes that, while every church is independent, it can work with other churches of like faith and order, in such relationships as associations and conventions. However, the church itself must decide what its relationships with others will be.

He believes in fellowship with all Christians, and in working with them in any and every way that he can do so, without compromising his New Testament based convictions, but he has little interest in the Ecumenical movements of our day, which, he feels, are based, not upon the New Testament precepts, but upon human concepts.

He believes in the absolute separation of church and state, and does not believe that the state should control the church or support it with tax funds. He believes in a free church in a free state.

III.

These are characteristics which we believe you will find in Mr. Average Baptist.

You will find them whether he is in one Baptist denominational group or another, or in none. Certainly all of these statements will not fit every Baptist.

Some Baptists probably will reject several of them.

But looking at Baptists as a whole, and looking for one who represents the majority, we believe you will find that these characteristics fit.

Certainly, if you find a person holding to these positions, you know that he is a Baptist.

He will not be something else.

His first concern, as a Baptist holding these positions, is to please God. It disturbs him little that others may criticize, or disagree with him.

His may be an unusual attitude in our world of modern religious compromise, but it is an attitude based upon conviction, and that conviction is founded upon the Bible.

Mr. Baptist believes that the Bible makes him Baptist.

And believing that the Bible is God's revelation to men, he must follow it wherever it leads him. He can take no other course.

Truett Writes On "The Supper Of Our Lord"

By George W. Truett

This message was first delivered as a sermon in First Baptist Church of Dallas. Some years later it was published as a tract by the Baptist Sunday School Board. Also it later appeared in a book of sermons. We are herewith presenting it as it appeared as a tract, with some minor deletions because of its unusual length. Here is one of the clearest presentations of the historic Baptist position on the Lord's Supper that we ever have read. While it is unusually long, we hope you will read it, study it, and clip and file.—Ed.)

There are two ordinances set in the churches, and only two. They do not come from men. They are of divine appointment—baptism and the Lord's Supper. Since the deep, gracious meanings of Christianity are symbolized by these ordinances, their observance cannot but be fraught with far-reaching moment to both the church and the world. Our consideration today shall be given to one of them—the Lord's Supper.

Unceasing controversies have gathered about it (the Supper) for hundreds of years, controversies often of the most hostile and misleading tendencies. Often it has been wrested from its true position in the church, and its most solemn meanings have

been mocked and disregarded. It has been offered to sinful souls as a Saviour, and used as a sacrament at the marriage altar, and employed as a sacrifice for men after they are dead. Awful has been the history that has gathered about the Supper.

I have a question to ask of every Christian. There may be different opinions and widely divergent sentiments respecting the Supper. Here is the question: Do you not agree that nothing should be our criterion in this matter, save the word of God? That long-established customs, and peculiar tastes, and personal sentiments must not decide our belief and practice in this solemn matter, but that this is the function alone of God's word? Conceding this, as all of us must, then let this question be put to all of our hearts: Shall not you and I and every child of God... agree to lay down every preconceived sentiment and opinion, concerning this Supper, for which we cannot find a positive "thus saith the Lord?" Now, if we have answered as we ought, then we ought and may see all of God's word on this subject.

There are three vital questions growing out of this Supper that we need specifically to consider. The first is, Whose is this Supper? The second is, To whom was it given? The third is,

What is its meaning? Let us prayerfully look at these questions as they have been asked.

It is the Lord's Supper.

I. Whose is this Supper?—What is your answer to this question: Whose is this Supper? There can be but one mind concerning it, if we allow God's word to answer it. Matthew, Mark and Luke all speak of it, and this is their unvarying testimony: "And Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat: this is my body.' And likewise he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying, 'This is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many.' You will observe that precisely the same truth is affirmed by Paul. The question, then, is settled as to whose is the Supper. It does not belong to Moses or the prophets or to the apostles.

This is the Lord's Supper. It is his, not only because he instituted it, but also because he appointed it as a memorial of himself. Then since Jesus instituted it and for the specific purpose just named, isn't it beyond every question his table? He so designates it in every reference made in his word.

When our Lord instituted it and gave it to the eleven, his language

leaves no doubt that this Supper in every sense is his. This is his language: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom." (Luke 22:29, 30.) Plainly it is here stated by him that this table is his. Clear as the light are all the scriptures that this Supper is the Lord's. It, then this Supper is the Lord's, he alone must prescribe the rules regulating and governing it.

Your neighbor proposes to give a dining. It is for him to make every regulation, specification, and limitation concerning it. These regulations he carefully makes and commits to his servants. What are these servants to do? There is nothing else for them to do except to follow literally the instructions of their master. They can not legitimately say, "Now, this is not our table—it is our master's—it is not for us therefore to say who shall or who shall not come to the table—every man in the community must pass on this matter for himself." To suppose this case is at the same time to suggest its absurdity. Those servants are literally and fully to follow instructions, just as the trust was committed to them by their master.

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truth for modern man



Why Baptism Is A Burial

By W. O. Carver

(This article by the late Dr. W. O. Carver, long professor of missions at Southern Seminary, was published in the Texas Baptist Standard nearly 20 years ago, since it is timeless in its message and importance we are republishing it in this doctrinal issue.) See Romans 6:1-11; Especially Verse 4

Baptists are not separatists. They do not consider themselves nor wish to be considered a "sect" of Christianity. They believe in the fellowship of all the redeemed and rejoice in the spiritual unity of all who know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. If they maintain a separate existence as a Christian denomination, it is because they are convinced that they have a duty to Jesus Christ, a message to their fellow Christians and a mission to discharge in the fulfillment of the function of Christianity in the human race and in the building of the Kingdom of God.

In the passage in Romans the Holy Spirit, through the Apostle Paul, tells us why baptism is a burial; why the ordinance which stands at the formal

entrance upon Christian life is a burial ordinance. Unless there is some important principle involved in the fact of this profession ordinance no people would be justified in making an issue over it: No people have the moral right to separate themselves from other Christians on any issue which is not of permanent value to the faith of Christ, or which does not contribute vitally to the ultimate purposes of the Gospel.

The enterprise of Jesus Christ is the supreme undertaking of God as revealed in the Scriptures and in history. Our Lord undertook it at great cost and planned it with divine wisdom. His organization is very simple. His method is very direct. His ordinances are very few—only two. Their purpose ought to be clear, and their use faithfully kept.

Baptism Symbolizes Doctrine
Baptism is a picture of truth. It is a true picture of the truths that lie at the foundation of redemption, of the individual and of humanity.

Christianity as an experience, as a system and as a force in history rests on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the "chief cornerstone" of its foundation, and it was laid in an opened tomb. "Christ died for our sins and was raised for our justification." Wherever that is lost sight of Christianity loses its power.

Jesus knew from the beginning of his ministry that he must die for mankind. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. With no illusions, and without reservation, he committed himself from the start to the full payment of the awful price. When he came to John the Baptist it was to be baptized into the full dedication to his ministry of atonement, including his death and resurrection. "Thus," said he to John, "it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." In this way (ours) must be redeemed men. He knew that at the other end of his ministry there must be death and rising again, and in this pictured way in the River Jordan he accepted from the start the full sacrifice.

Men are dead in trespasses and in sin. If they are to live spiritually they must be raised from this spiritual death. There must be a new creation. "The old man with his deeds" must be put off, and a new life entered upon. This is a hard doctrine to grasp, but it is the only way to life. "We are dead to sin and its law, and are alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:11)

So they who at the door of the Christian way a picture meant to proclaim constantly to all men that all men, and each man, must make a complete break with an unworthy past and enter upon a new life and a new way of living in the Kingdom of Heaven.

And that it might be proclaimed that this change is no mere reformation of man, but a new creation, the work of God within man, there is the resurrection from the symbolical water grave from which we are raised to "walk in newness of life," "even as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father."

Baptism Embodies Experience of Believer in Christ

"We who died to sin" were "made alive unto God in Christ Jesus." Only "He that died to sin is justified from sin"—not any other man. Christian conversion means a complete break with the past life. In my baptism I express to my own consciousness, announce to my fellow-believers of the church, and proclaim to all men that through the grace of "him who for my sake died and rose again" I have died to sin and been raised to new life, and hope, and peace. I have come into a new relation to God.

Baptism Persuades Conduct

"We who died to sin how shall we any longer live therein?" Such is Paul's protest of indignant horror at the suggestion that sin can be a matter of indifference to the man who is saved by grace through faith. "Did ye not know," he exclaims, "that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death." Herein rests our only right to this burial symbol. The three chapters of Romans, VI to VIII, are a tremendous argument to the effect that salvation in Christ by faith commits the saved man to the complete conquest of sin; plunges him into a terrific conflict with sin; and puts him in conquering relation with the divine energies that destroy sin.

The whole section from VI:1 to VII:6 urges, on principle and with various illustrations, that the man who accepts the dead, risen, and living Christ for his Saviour must "reckon himself to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Christ Jesus." Sin must have "no more dominion over him."

The power for all this began in a Saviour crucified and risen. The experience began in my being crucified along with Christ and being lifted into a new life. "If any man be in Christ there is a new creation." I must now live that new creation. I must no longer hear the call of sin. I must be genuinely dead to it. This I declared in my baptismal burial, and commit myself to it.

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"The Supper Of Our Lord"

(Continued from page 1)

So it is with Christ's people concerning his Supper. They have no authority or option in this matter. This is not their table. This is the Lord's table. This is the Lord's table. If this were man's table, then to it he might invite his friends according to his opinions and tastes and inclinations. He might give the invitation whenever and wherever and to whomever he would. But he must remember evermore that this is the Lord's table. Human sentiment therefore is not to govern it. Long-established customs are not to govern it. Prejudices, tastes, or feelings are not to govern it. Will you say that a command or an appointment of God may be governed and decided by the people as they would regulate some public enterprise? Then you forget that this book is as unchanging and unchangeable as God. You may as consistently talk about your right to change the doctrine of regeneration as to talk about your right to change the place and purpose of this Supper. He who placed it in his church has alone the indefeasible right to prescribe every regulation for its government. He either has or has not done this.

If he has, then any talk about "cousinage" and "liberality" concerning it surely cannot be in place. Shall we talk of "liberality" concerning things that are not ours? That neighbor cannot wisely talk of "liberality" concerning his neighbor's dining. The latter neighbor must be the judge of his own table. He is to pass upon its every regulation and limitation, and with it the outside neighbor has no authority whatever. So this table is our Lord's, and if he has put regulations and limitations upon it — and that this he has done cannot be denied — then his regulations are not only wise, but their strict observance is virtually necessary to his own honor and the well-being of his churches. For God's people to do otherwise is to be unfaithful to him and to be treasonable with the trust that he has committed unto them.

The Lord's Gift to His Disciples.
 2. Our second question is, To whom did our Lord give the Supper? For whom did he intend it? He certainly gave it to somebody. To whom? Did he give it to his enemies? To those who would sneer at it and pervert it? To men yet blind and lost in sin? To ask these questions is at the same time to answer them. Our Lord gave this Supper to his disciples, and not to the world. There is no disagreement among Christian people here. We are all agreed that the Lord gave this ordinance to his own people and not to the world.

Then the first prerequisite in coming to this table is that one must be a true disciple of Jesus Christ. He must have been regenerated by the Spirit of God. No other one can in spirit either partake of this Supper or be really baptized. These ordinances symbolize spiritual things, and spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. Regeneration is the first and an inexorable prerequisite to this table. Let God's word here speak on this matter. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all unite in saying that "Jesus gave the Supper to the disciples" — to the disciples and not to the world. He gave it to the eleven, and who were with him on that sad, lone night. To these apostles, the nucleus of his church, the Supper was committed. That it was committed to his disciples and not to the world is seen from this record in Acts 20: 7: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread" — that is, to observe the Supper. This is the record of the early church now fully at work. Then, clearly it was committed to Christ's people and intended only for them.

The two ordinances, baptism and the Supper, symbolize the entire gospel of the Son of God. The Supper symbolizes the constant feeding of the soul that has been begotten unto a spiritual life by the power of God. Bread and wine indicate nourishment. This new life must have nourishment. It must be fed. That is the reason why we often observe this Supper. It symbolizes that heavenly nourishment upon which the new life is dependent for all its growth and usefulness in the service of God. Baptism symbolizes another thing. It symbolizes our death and burial to the old life, and our resurrection to walk in the new life. This death, burial, and resurrection take place but once. Hence we are baptized but once. Our resurrection to the new life is once for all, therefore it is symbolized but once, by baptism. But the new life just begun has to be sustained and nourished. Therefore, often do God's people come to this table, and only his redeemed people can come. A lost man is a dead man. The dead cannot eat. You do not feed corpses. You feed only the living. So this Supper, by its very constitution and character, is intended only for those washed in Christ's precious blood.

Restricted to the Baptized.
 But again, not only was it restricted to Christ's disciples, but these same disciples must previously have been baptized. I beg you to pause and think on this a moment. Do the Scriptures teach that baptism is prerequisite to this Supper? Plainly and fully they do so teach. In this word, baptism always goes before the Supper. But, again, there is practically no disagreement among Christian people on this point. All the great bodies of Christian people are agreed that this Supper is to be observed

only by the baptized, and that no one has the scriptural right to come who has not been baptized. A very few small bodies, together with a few individuals, dissent from this view but there is but one mind about it among the several large bodies of Christians throughout the world. They are thoroughly and earnestly agreed that only baptized people ought to come to the Lord's table. This proposition is true historically, denominationally, and scripturally.

What, then, is the issue between our Baptist people and others concerning this ordinance? The answer may be stated in one brief sentence: The issue mainly gathers about the ordinance of baptism. We believe that only baptized people — and but one thing to us means scriptural baptism — may scripturally come to this table. Here, then, is the chief issue between us and other people. I said a moment ago that baptism always comes before the Supper. This is historically true. The great historians who have written about it confirm it. Let me quote three or four brief sentences from them. Mosheim, speaking of Christians in the first century, says: "They were such as had been solemnly admitted into the church by baptism." Justin Martyr wrote, 150 A. D.: "It is not lawful for any to partake of the Lord's Supper, but such as believe the things that are taught by us to be true, and have been baptized." Gibbon, in his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," says: "With the early Christians the Lord's Supper followed baptism." Neander, the leading church historian, says: "No man could be present at the communion who was not a member of the church and incorporated into it by baptism."

Not only is it true historically that baptism goes before the Supper, but, as stated a moment ago, it is true denominationally. Baptists, then, are not alone who propose "close" or "restricted communion," as it is commonly called. Every great denomination of Christians throughout the world does identically the same thing. There is not a scintilla of difference between Baptists and others on this point. They, with us, demand that before one comes to the table, he must have previously been baptized. The issue then is not about "close communion" — it is close baptism. With Baptists, immersion alone is baptism, and the immersion of one who has already been saved. With them, nothing else can be scriptural baptism.

Here opens before us a tremendous field for thought. Our people are unyielding and immovable in their contention that a person to be scripturally baptized must first have believed on Christ and been saved by him, and then immersed. They believe that nobody can be scripturally baptized, even though his body be immersed, if he has not already been saved by Christ. Therefore they are compelled to deny the scripturalness for sprinkling or pouring for baptism. To them neither has even the semblance of scriptural baptism. And furthermore, they would also reject as fundamentally unscriptural the immersion of infants, if that were even proposed in the place of sprinkling or pouring, because the Scriptures demand personality, voluntariness, and spirituality in all the duties of Christianity. Baptism and the Supper are for the saved alone, and only the saved can scripturally observe either ordinance.

Sincerity not Sufficient.
 But some good men who think differently from what I have said, says: "My baptism is not immersion, but I am sincere in it, that it is scriptural baptism." I will not question his sincerity, but shall I pass upon his sincerity or upon my own? I do not believe that he has been scripturally baptized, in any conceivable sense. I must be governed, therefore, by my own convictions of the teachings of God's word, and not be his. It is not enough to say because one is sincere that therefore he is right. If that were true, then Paul was as right before his conversion as afterwards, because he was sincere in his conviction that, in his bitter persecution of the church, he was serving God. If it were true, the heathen in his mad idolatry is safe, because he is sincere. Do you not see that this standard alone might pervert all truth? No, this whole matter with us is a ques-

tion of the interpretation of the word of God. Frankly, candidly, and livingly we differ from our brethren as to "what saith the Scriptures" concerning these two ordinances.

Though we are compelled thus to differ from them, irreconcilably, in our interpretation of God's word, yet we differ in tenderest Christian love. God pity Christian men who otherwise differ and who magnify their differences by unchristian wranglings and spirit! He has shown unto us a more excellent way. Differing, as we thus do fundamentally, we would not only be inconsistent but we would also be dishonorable in the sight of God and men to ask those to come to this table whom we solemnly believe have never been baptized.

The Other Denominations.
 Let me read you some brief quotations, that you may see how they are coming to appreciate the position of our Baptist people. I quote these words from the American Presbyterian, as printed some years ago:

"Open communion is an absurdity, when it means communion with the unbaptized. I would not for a moment consider a proposal to admit an unbaptized person to the communion, and can I ask a Baptist so to stigmatize himself and ignore his own doctrine as to wish me to commune with him while he believes I am unbaptized? I want no sham union and no sham unity, and if I held the Baptist notion about immersion, I would no more receive a Presbyterian to the communion than I would receive a Quaker. Let us have unity, indeed, but not at the expense of principle; and let us not ask the Baptist to ignore or be inconsistent with his own doctrine. Let us not either make an outcry at his 'close communion,' which is an outcry at his own vision is not clear."

Now, that is candid and noble and Christian. He understands the situation just as it is.

That matchless orator, Henry Ward Beecher, used these words in the Christian Union a few years ago:

"A Peder-Baptist who believes that baptism is a prerequisite to communion has no right to censure the Baptist churches for close communion. On this question there is a great deal of pulling out of motives by people whose own vision is not clear."

The late Dr. John Hall of New York, one of the leading Presbyterians of the world, said these candid words:

"If I believed with the Baptists, that none are baptized but those who are immersed on profession of faith, then I should, with them, refuse to commune with any others."

Faithful words are these from the great preacher who went home only a few years ago.

Dr. Hibbard, the great Methodist leader, thus speaks:

"It is but just to remark that, in one principle, the Baptist and Peder-Baptist churches agree. They both agree in rejecting from communion the table of the Lord and in denying the rights of church fellowship to all who have not been baptized. Valid baptism, these churches do not dispute. The only difference is in the mode of baptism. The Baptist insists on immersion, while the Peder-Baptist insists on sprinkling or pouring."

The distinguished Episcopalian Dr. Wall, says:

"No church ever gave the communion to persons before they were baptized. Among all the absurdities that were ever held, none ever maintained that any person should partake of the communion before they were baptized."

These are just a few of many similar expressions that are being spoken by our brethren who differ from us. These expressions are truthful and noble and Christian, and they state the case just as it is.

The One Word of Authority.

But, waiving all the historical and denominational testimony to the proposition, that baptism is a prerequisite to the Supper, let us see especially to the question: "What saith the Scriptures?" Does this word teach that men ought to be baptized before they come to the table? Here are its answers:

"When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples)," There is Christ's law: (1) Making disciples; (2) baptizing them. Again, when the successor to Jesus was to be chosen, the demand was that the one ordained to be a witness, with the other apostles, of Christ's resurrection, must be "from the baptism of John."

When Jesus gave the Great Commission (Matt. 28: 19, 20), this was the order of its development: (1) Make disciples; (2) baptize these disciples; and (3) properly teach them. Is it thinkable to you that Jesus would have these apostles and early Christians demand of others what he did not demand of them? And now, later, we find the early church at Jerusalem is literally carrying out this commission. Here is the record: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day

were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread (i. e., the Supper), and in prayers." (Acts 2: 41, 42.) How simple this record: Men are convicted of sin under Peter's preaching. He points them to Jesus, who saves them. They are then baptized. Next, they are steadfast, in the apostles' doctrine and in fellowship. All these things occur before the Supper. Perfectly clear, then, is God's word, as taught by both Jesus and the apostles, that the first duty of the believer is baptism and that baptism comes before the Supper.

Church Membership a Prerequisite.
 But, still further: Not only did Jesus give this Supper to his disciples, who had been previously baptized, but he gave it to the baptized disciples in their organized capacity; that is to say, he gave this Supper to his church. Then, a third prerequisite to this table is orderly church membership.

Note the order: Regeneration, baptism, church membership. To his churches, then, Jesus committed this ordinance. He did not commit it to preachers as such, or to individuals, as such, but to his churches, in their church capacity. To all of you I put this question: Who is to judge of the qualifications of people who come to this table? There can be but two answers. One is that it is an individual matter, and that the individual must wholly pass upon it. The other view is that this ordinance was committed to the churches, to be preserved by them in all its pristine purity and meaning. Shall the individual desiring to come to this table be the sole judge of his qualifications, or shall the church be the judge?

If you say the individual shall be the sole judge, then you cannot keep any man away from the Lord's table. Let me show you the utter inconsistency of it. In your church is a man guilty of insubordination to church authority, or some gross immorality, or some serious heresy. Fidelity to God's word compels you to withdraw from him, and you obey that word. The solemn act of withdrawal is taken by the church, in obedience to God's command, and for the preservation of the church. Next Sunday the excluded man comes again into the worship of God's people. And now they come to observe the Lord's Supper. Every man present is told to be his own judge, and come to the table if he so chooses. There sits the excluded man, whose immorality is odious to the community, and whose heresy seeks to subvert the very fundamentals of the gospel and yet he is included in the invitation to the Lord's table. Is it consistent? Is it righteous? Can it be honoring to God? How dare his people do it?

Why not the Immersed?

Just here is answered another question: Why do not Baptists invite the immersed of other denominations to the Lord's table? The answer is near at hand: Immersion only, as before said, does not constitute scriptural baptism. He is already saved, and not in any sense to secure salvation. Just here we are compelled to differ, fundamentally, from some who agree with us as to the proper act of baptism. One of the fundamental designs of baptism is to symbolize the great fact of the believer's death to sin and his resurrection to a spiritual life that has already taken place. And still again, baptism must be administered by a proper administrator. This ordinance, as well as the Supper, has been committed to the church. Then the church alone can legally administer it. But suppose a body of Christian people inveigh against immersion as the scriptural act of baptism, and give their influence in writing against it, speaking against it, and teaching against it; and if, to secure a member, or for any other cause, immersion is administered by them, against their consciences and against what they conceive to be the teaching of God's word; and if, as is unwaveringly held by Baptists, immersion alone is the proper act of baptism; then can such baptism be orderly, consistent, and scriptural? Our convictions of God's word compel us to answer in the negative.

Still further answering the question: The Bible not only plainly specifies certain prerequisites to the

Supper, but it also just as plainly specifies certain disqualifications. Now, since the Supper is an ordinance of the church, it must inevitably follow that whatever would debar a man from the church must also debar him from the Lord's table in that church. It is logically inconceivable that one should be deprived of membership in the church and yet not also be deprived of coming to the Lord's table in that church, since the first privilege is the source and foundation for the second.

Among the causes mentioned in the Scriptures, for which a church should withdraw from members, are these: Insubordination to church authority; immoral conduct, a schismatical spirit, heresy, and disobedience to the commands of Christ. Do we see schism, heresy, and disobedience to the commands of Christ in the teachings of other Christian people, who believe and teach so differently from us? Our separate existence is a sufficient answer. Then the question is answered, by the two points of valid baptism and scriptural doctrine, as to why Baptists do not invite the immersed of other denominations to the Lord's table.

The Church as Custodian.

That the local church is the custodian of this ordinance, and must judge of the qualifications of those desiring to partake of it, is shown by the fact that the command to observe it was given, not to individuals, but to a company. On the night of its institution, Jesus said to the eleven, themselves his incipient church: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom." (Luke 22: 29, 30.) Manifestly, this table is inside and not outside the church. The church alone can, therefore, be charged with the responsibility for its government. Writing to the church at Corinth, Paul uses this language: "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they so sacrifice to devils, and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." (I Cor. 10: 21, 22.) What is Paul talking about? He is talking about the influence that idolatry is insidiously wielding upon the church at Corinth. He finds there, for example, this condition, a husband and a wife — the one an idolater, the other a Christian. The idolater proposes to the Christian: "Come with me to my table, then I will go with you to yours." This, Paul declared to be fundamentally wrong. Not for the sake of husband or wife, or mother or child, could the Christian sit, now at one table and then at another. The place and purpose of the two tables imperatively forbade such inconsistency and compromise.

Writing further to the same church, earnestly does Paul bring out the thought that the observance of this ordinance is not an individual act, but the joint act of the church. "When ye come together in the church, . . . when ye come together to eat (i. e., to observe the Supper), tarry one for another." (I Cor. 11: 18, 20, 33.) Never individually, but only in her collective capacity, can the church observe this Supper. Therefore I always instantly decline to carry these emblems out to the sick and the dying. Awful is the perversion of this ordinance, where men individually take these emblems here and there, to be individually ministered to the aged and sick and dying.

Writing elsewhere to the same church, Paul says: "For we, being many, are one bread, and one body." (I Cor. 10: 17.) As it takes the separate States of the union to make the United States, so the members of a church, not individually, but "being many are one bread, and one body," must act collectively in order scripturally to observe this ordinance. We have seen at length that the answer to our second question is, that a local church is the only body known to the Scriptures which has any competency or jurisdiction in the government of her two ordinances.

The Meaning of the Supper.

3. Our third question is, What is the meaning of this Supper? What is our design in its observance today, and our regular observance of it? This is a question of great moment. Some of the most grievous evils that have ever afflicted the world, have grown out of the perversion of the design of this Supper. Three distinct views are held with regard to its nature. There is the view of the Romanist, called transubstantiation, which view is that this bread and wine are literally changed, by the consecration of the priest, into the very body and blood of Christ; and that, by thus eating Christ's body and drinking his blood, God's saving grace is received by the communicant. The view of the Lutheran, and, perhaps, some others, called consubstantiation, is, that though the bread and wine are not changed, yet along with them is present the real body and blood of Christ, so that both are eaten at the same time by the communicant. So palpably do these two theories contradict the plain nature and purpose of this ordinance, and the whole gospel, that I do not

need to stop in this presence to refute them.

Let this simple statement of God's word show us this Supper's meaning: "This do, in remembrance of me." Here is its meaning in one brief sentence: "This do in remembrance of me." But some one asks: "Do we not come to this table to commune with one another, or to show our Christian fellowship one for another?" Such sentiment is widespread and has done incalculable harm. Only once is it called a "communion" in the Scriptures, and that by Paul, where he says: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (I Cor. 10: 16.) A better translation of this word "communion" would be "participation," and it does not mean A, B, and C participating with each other, but participating with the "body and blood of Christ."

Jesus does not say, "Do this in remembrance of certain loved ones, or to show fellowship or them," but, "Do this in remembrance of me." It is the only thing he ever asked his people to do whereby they might remember him. Oh, shall we deny him this simple request? The question of "showing Christian fellowship for others" is not even to be thought of when we gather at this table of our Lord. Yea, more: For any one to come here with such motive is a grave sin in the sight of God. "Do this in remembrance of me."

As to Christian Fellowship.

It is not a question of Christian fellowship. There are other times and places for the tender and beautiful manifestation of Christian fellowship, but this is, not the time nor place to be thinking of that. "Do this in remembrance of me." I believe in the heartfelt, joyous fellowship of all God's children. I know nothing of my poor heart, if it does not thrill with tenderest Christian fellowship for every one in whom I see that image of my Redeemer. Though I believe that great multitudes of my Father's children have never scripturally been baptized, yet I love and esteem them as earnest, noble Christians. I love them with an unspeakable love, and no man shall go ahead of me in cherishing tenderest Christian fellowship for them. But, far be from me all such thoughts when I gather at this table to remember my Lord.

There is this other scripture that should always be read in this connection: "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation (i. e., condemnation) to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." (I Cor. 11: 27-30.) What Christian has not felt unspeakable trembling as he read that awful sentence? "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation (i. e., condemnation) to himself." What does it mean? The answer is found in the latter clause of the same verse: "Not discerning the Lord's body."

There is but one motive and thought to concern us as we come to this table. To come to it with any other than to "discern the Lord's body" is to harm the soul and to sin against Christ. It is a question touching your motive in coming. It is not a question of your sense of unworthiness. Certainly you are unworthy, and you are also unworthy of all the countless blessings of salvation. But, in coming to this table, for what do you come? It is to remember Jesus. It is to discern his body. That is the one motive. All this talk about gathering around this table to show fellowship for mother, wife, child, neighbor, is not only senseless twaddle, but it is a sin against God and men. Oh, my Saviour, shall our thought in coming to thy table today be about dear mother, or wife, or child, and shall these earthly forms displace the broken and bleeding form of Jesus, who gave himself unto death for us? God forbid! No wonder it is said of those who thus come: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Oh, my brethren, see to it, do see to it, that in coming to this table today but one thing is to engage the powers of your minds and hearts, and that is that you "discern the Lord's body." And know, once for all, that any other coming is mockery against the meaning of this ordinance and against him who gave it.

There is still another scripture that we should briefly examine: "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." (I Cor. 11: 28.) This is often quoted by those who insist upon "individuality" and "liberality" in the observance of this ordinance. Let us examine the verse a moment. To whom were the words addressed? They were addressed to a church, the church at Corinth. This same church, as we have before learned, was instructed concerning this Supper, to "Come together in the church. . . . to come together into one place, . . . and to tarry one for another, when they thus came together to observe the supper." (I Cor. 11: 18, 20, 33.) All thought of individualism in the observance of the Supper is thus destroyed.

Then, when this church, collectively, is ready to observe the Supper, the question of self-examination is pressed upon every individual who

(Continued on page 5)



Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper" has been reproduced (above) in a wool-hooking technique by Elizabeth Le Fort of Nova Scotia. — (RNS Photo)